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Colby: Candor on CIA Led to Firing

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Former Central Intelligence Agency

Director William E. Colby says he believes President Ford fired him in the fall of 1975 because of Colby's determination not "to stonewall" congressional and executive branch investigations of CIA wrongdoing.

In an autobiography scheduled to be published in May, Colby says he got a number of warnings from the outset that he was being too candid, including one from then-Vice President Rockefeller.

Ford named Rockefeller in January 1975 to preside over the executive

branch inquiry as chairman of the Presidential Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States.

In his book, entitled "Honorably Men: My Life in the CIA," Colby says Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft, who headed Ford's National Security Council, also expressed their distress to him as the congressional inquiries proceeded.

In a prepared statement, Rockefeller denied a brief account in Newsweek magazine's Periscope column saying that Rockefeller had asked Colby to "stonewall" Rockefeller's investigating commission. But the former vice president declined yesterday through a spokesman to go be-

yond that and comment on the details in Colby's book.

The former CIA director said that after his second or third appearance before the Rockefeller commission in early 1975, the vice president drew him aside "and said in his most charming manner: 'Bill, do you really have to present all this material to us?'"

According to Colby, Rockefeller continued, saying, "We realize that there are secrets that you fellows need to keep, and so nobody here is going to take it amiss if you feel that there are some questions you can't answer."

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quite as fully as you seem to feel you have to."

Colby said he "got the message quite unmistakably" and didn't like it. The vice president of the United States, he said, was "letting me know that he didn't approve of my approach," and that he would rather Colby begin "fending off investigations by drawing the cloak of secrecy" around the CIA in the name of national security.

The former CIA director said he "mumbled something appropriate" to Rockefeller and then "went on to give the commission what it needed to get a fair picture of CIA's history."

After Newsweek's one-paragraph item about Colby's forthcoming book appeared this week, The New York Times published additional detail in yesterday's editions.

It also quoted Richard E. Snyder, president of Simon & Schuster, which is publishing the book, as deploring a "front-page mentality" that is making it difficult to circulate advance proofs of works such as Colby's.

The Washington Post then decided to publish an article based on a proof copy of the book in its possession. Snyder could not be reached for additional comment.

Colby recounts in some detail why he chose to oust CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton in December 1974, just before publication of The New York Times story that prompted the investigations of the agency. According to Colby, Angleton had an "ultraconspiratorial turn of mind," full of tortuous suspicions

that Soviet intelligence agents were planted in the heart of allied and neutral nations and notions about false defectors being sent here to undermine American policies.

What really turned him off, Colby said, was the discovery that good CIA officers were being hurt as the result of such theories. On one occasion, he said, the head of a friendly liaison service in a foreign capital "drew me aside on a visit to confront me with the fact that Angleton had told him that our chief of station there was a Soviet agent." Colby said he checked and found that the matter had been thoroughly investigated years earlier and the officer "given a totally clean bill of health."

Asked for comment, Angleton expressed alarm last night that Colby had been permitted to make such disclosures. He also said that he made no allegation of his own, but merely conveyed information from a "sensitive source" with whom the Foreign Service was familiar.

Charging that Colby was being permitted to give out "some of the most sensitive counterintelligence" information, Angleton protested that "there'll be at least a dozen people [in Moscow] reading his book against their [KGB] data computer machines." The former counterintelligence chief deplored that the CIA, which reviewed the manuscript, had permitted such information to be published.

For his part, Colby said he felt the agency had made too many excisions.

In his book, written with former Time magazine correspondent Peter Forbath, Colby says he felt quite lonely in his attempts to be candid about the misdeeds of his agency. He writes that most of the White House staff and much of the intelligence community would have preferred "to stonewall, to disclose as little as they could get away with."

In the furor that followed publication of The New York Times story on Dec. 22, 1974, Colby dictated a report for President Ford, saying the misdeeds had been ferreted out and halted months earlier and suggesting that his report on the incidents "all be released to the press immediately," but his advice was ignored.

Instead, as he continued on his own course of testifying on Capitol Hill, especially before the quickly created Senate Intelligence Committee, Colby recalled being chided by both Kissinger and Scowcroft.

"Kissinger, in a sarcastically teasing reference to my Catholicism, cracked, 'Bill, you know what you do when you go up to the Hill? You go to confession.' Scowcroft . . . didn't try to be witty about it; he flatly said I should refuse to reply to the questions the Congress was asking."

Other factors, such as a new look for the agency, may have figured in his dismissal by Ford, but Colby writes: "I believe I was fired because of the way I went about dealing with the CIA's crisis. My approach, pragmatically and philosophically, was in conflict with that of the president and his principal advisers."